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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ'S INTIMIDATION TACTICS: POLICE ARREST
CARACAS PREFECT

REF: CARACAS 1120

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBIN D. MEYER,
FOR REASON 1.4(D)

11. (C) Summary: The Prefect of the Caracas metropolitan district, Richard Blanco, was arrested by state security officers on August 26 for his alleged involvement in "injurious and law-breaking behavior." Blanco is the president of Metropolitan Mayor Antonio Ledezma's Brave People's Alliance (ABP) party and was apparently involved in a scuffle between police and opposition protesters in Caracas during the August 22 march against the education law (Reftel). The arrest, purportedly without a judge's order, appears to be yet another act of political intimidation by the Chavez administration against the opposition, and specifically against Ledezma's supporters. End Summary.

BLANCO ARRESTED

12. (SBU) Caracas Prefect Richard Blanco was arrested the afternoon of August 26 by the Scientific, Penal, and Criminal Police (CICPC) on charges that he incited injurious and law-breaking behavior. As of late August 26, Blanco was being held at CICPC headquarters. Blanco's lawyer, Alberto Arteaga, publicly contended that the detention was "absolutely illegal (and) contrary to the guidelines of the constitution." He added that there had been no judicial order or flagrant act that would justify an arrest. Blanco is scheduled to appear before a Caracas court on August 27.

13. (C) Metropolitan councilman Anibal Sanchez spoke over the phone with Poloff August 27, as he was part of a crowd of opposition members who were gathering to protest in front of the court where Blanco was preparing to appear. He said that Blanco's charges stem from his involvement in a scuffle during the previous Saturday's protest against the education law between metropolitan police (PM) "intelligence officers" and opposition protesters. Allegedly, the PMs had "infiltrated" the march and were surreptitiously taking pictures of protesters near the march's start in Chacao. After the officers were uncovered, the marchers gave chase after a PM. According to Sanchez, Blanco stepped in to defend the PM "kid" from being physically assaulted. Some opposition-oriented media sources have claimed it is not clear that the PMs involved are, in fact, police officers. Director General of Civil Policy for the Metropolitan Mayor's office Ivan Marcano publicly complained August 27 that "the situation is so confusing" because no information had been released by the Attorney General or the police.

¶4. (C) Marcano suggested that the arrest was an act of political persecution targeting Metropolitan Mayor Antonio Ledezma. Sanchez noted that Blanco is the president of Ledezma's Brave People's Alliance (ABP) party, and ABP spokesman Oscar Perez led the opposition charge to complain to the Attorney General's office about the police's "disproportionate" response during the march. Ledezma appointed Blanco to the prefecture, presumably as a consolation prize, after Blanco dropped out of the 2008 race for the Liberator municipal mayorship in favor of opposition unity candidate Stalin Gonzalez (of Un Nuevo Tiempo). Sanchez said that Blanco's position oversees metropolitan issues (i.e. within Libertador) including the civil registry, marriage/birth/death certificates, and enforcing municipal ordinances such as dealing with noise complaints. He pointed out that under the recently passed legislation, many of these responsibilities had been shifted elsewhere. Sanchez noted that registries, for example, are now under the authority of the National Electoral Council (CNE).

¶5. (C) Comment: Ledezma has become an increasingly vocal opposition critic of Chavez. He received significant press coverage during the march against the education law, and international media attention for his assertion that Venezuela is experiencing a "slow motion coup." End Comment.
DUDDY